

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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SCCT-01 /060 W

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R 201730Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6303

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0719

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XK, NU

SUBJECT: MEETING OF DEFENSE MINISTERS OF CENTRAL AMERICA

REF: STATE 035457

1. FEBRUARY 5 MEETING OF CENTRAL AMERICAN DEFENSE MINISTERS, OFFICIALLY TERMED SEVENTH EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF CENTRAL AMERICAN DEFENSE COUNCIL (CONDECA) WAS SUMMONED BY THE CURRENT PRESIDENT OF THAT BODY NICARAGUAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE HERBERTO SANCHEZ. MINISTERS ATTENDING WERE THE FOLLOWING: COLONEL FERMIN RAMIREZ LAN A, DEFENSE MINISTER

FOR HONDURAS: LIC. RICARDO RODRIGUEZ, MINISTER ON GOVERNMENT

AND JUSTICE NOR PANAMA; GENERAL NAUSTO DAVID RIBIO CORONADO, MINISTER OF DEFENSE FOR GUATEMALA; LIC. MARIO CHARPENTIER, MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY FOR COSTA RICA; COLONEL CARLOS HUMBERTO ROMERO, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND PUBLIC SECURITY FOR EL SALVADOR; AND COLONEL HERBERTO SANCHEZ, MINISTER
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OF DEFENSE FOR NICARAGUA.

2. MAIN POINTS OF OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE WERE THE FOLLOWING:

(A) SUPPORT FOR THE CREATION OF A REGIONAL BODY TO COORDINATE CIVIL DEFENSE IN TIME OF NATIONAL DISASTERS; (B) ENDORSEMENT OF INCREASED AND IMPROVED COMMUNICATION ON IMMIGRATION AND CRIMINAL PROBLEMS; (C) FOLLOWING A MEETING OF THE CHIEFS OF CIVIC ACTION, AGREEMENT THAT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS EXIST FOR ORGANIZING A SYSTEM OF CIVIL DEFENSE IN EACH COUNTRY AND RECOMMENDATION TO COORDINATE THESE PROGRAMS AT A CENTRAL AMERICAN LEVEL; AND (D) POSTPONEMENT OF CHANGE OF PRESIDENCY OF CONDECA. THROUGH CONDECA'S AGREEMENT ON THE LAST ITEM, NICARGUA'S SANCHEZ RETAINS THE PRESIDENCY FOR AN

INSPECIFIED PERIOD, A MANEUVER HE PULLED OFF WITH SUPPORT OF GUATEMALA, EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS THEREBY DENYING PRESIDENCY TO COSTA RICA WHICH WAS NEXT IN LINE. DAO'S REPORT NO. 6 870 0013 75 DATED FEBRUARY 11, 1975, PROVIDED FULL DETAILS ON SUBJECT MEETING INCLUDING AS ATTACHMENTS AGENDA, OFFICIAL MINUTES AND TEXT OF FINAL COMMUNIQUE.

3. DEFENSE MINISTER SANCHEZ HAS INFORMED DAO THAT REAL PURPOSE OF MEETING, WHICH IS NOT REFLECTED IN OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS, WAS TO POINT OUT DANGER TERRORIST/GUERILLA ACTIONS CONSTITUTE FOR OTHER CONDECA COUNTRIES IN VIEW OF NICARAGUA'S DECEMBER27-30 EXPERIENCE WITH FSLN TERRORIST GROUP, AND TO SEEK INCREASED COORDINATION IN COMBATTING THIS MUTUAL THREAT. IN HIS PRESENTATION, SANCHEZ REPORTEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT WHATEVER NAME TERRORIST GROUPS GO BY IN THEIR VARIOUS COUNTRIES THEY HARE SAME OBJECTIVES AND ARE ALL SUPPORTED BY CUBA AND BECAUSE OF THIS OUTSIDE THREAT CONSTITUTE A DANGER TO ALL CONDECA GOVERNMENTS. SANCHEZ WAS PARTICULARLY ADDRESSING HIS APPEAL TO REPRESENTATIVES OF COSTA RICA AND PANAMA WHICH HE BELIEVES HAVE BEEN LESS THAN COOPERATIVE IN CONTROLLING NICARAUAN DISSIDENTS, AND WAS NOT PARTICULARLY ASSURED FROM THE MEETING THAT THOSE GOVERNMENTS WOULD MEND THEIR WAYS.

4. PRESS COVERAGE OF THE MEETING WAS LIGHT, CONSISTING OF TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE AND A FRONT PAGE PICTURE IN SOMOZA-OWNED NOVEDADES OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA AND THE SIX MINISTERS.
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5. COMMENT: PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WASYET ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF GON CONCERN THAT ITS TERRORIST PROBLEM IS NOT BEING VIEWED BY ITS NEIGHBORS AS PART OF AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST CONSPIRACY ENCOURAGED BY CUBA BUT AS A NICARAGUAN DOMESTIC PROBLEM WHICH CALLS FOR SOMEWHAT LESS SYMPATHY AND SOLIDARITY. SOMOZA'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REMARKS SINCE THE FSLN INCIDENT, THE OFFICIAL PRESS TREATMENT, AND

THE UN DEMARCHE ARE OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE REGIME'S DESIRE TO EMPHASIZE THE FOREIGN ASPECTS OF THE FSLN CHALLENGE IN ORDER TO AVOID BEING ISOLATED ON THE PROBLEM. THE GON HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY PERTURBED BY REPORTS OF NICARAGUAN DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES AND UNFRIENDLY MEDIA TREATMENT IN PANAMA AND COSTA

RICA. WHILE SANCHEZ MAY HAVE BEEN CORRECT IN HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE COLLNESS OF THE COSTA RICAN AND PANAMANIAN AT THE CONDECA MEETING, PRESUMABLY NICARAGUA WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE MORE FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE ON COSTA RICAN PRESIDENT ODUBER IN HIS PRIVATE TALKS THE NEXT DAY WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA.
SHELTON

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